

## Appendix C: Summary of Public Input to the Wachusett Reservoir Watershed Public Access Plan Update 2003

The following is a summary of the comments received by the MDC/DWM in writing and in-person at the June 24, 2003 public hearing.

**Public Comment:** Is it possible to have angular parking instead of parallel parking in the popular Old Stone Church area?

***MDC Response:** The MDC does not have authority over the right-of-way in this area. This solution to the parking issue will be discussed with the proper authorities, either Mass Highway or the Town of West Boylston.*

**Public Comment:** Does this plan alter the downstream limits for fishing with waders and boating on the rivers?

***MDC Response:** No. The draft plan had some minor errors. Fishing with waders is still allowed on the Quinapoxet River upstream of the MDC Dam at the Oakdale Power Station and upstream of the Stillwater River confluence with Waushacum Brook. Canoeing is allowed on the Stillwater River upstream of the take-out at the steel bridge at Muddy Pond Rd and on the Quinapoxet River upstream of the turn-off on River Rd. between Canada Mills and the Oakdale Power Station. Placement of signs at the boat take-out locations has been placed as an item in the plan's implementation.*

**Public Comment:** The Town of West Boylston has several concerns about access and use of MDC property for its residents.

***MDC Response:** MDC Division of Watershed Management property primary purpose is water quality protection. Public access is controlled by legislation and DWM policies. The 2003 Wachusett Reservoir Watershed Public Access Plan Update maintains many existing opportunities for the public to enjoy MDC property, including hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, hunting and bicycling. The plan limits activities to areas where there is minimal impact to water quality. The possibility exists for municipalities to negotiate lease agreements for use of DWM property. Any such contracts, however, will stipulate measures required to protect water quality. If a municipality desires to obtain existing MDC/DWM land either through a long-term lease or in fee (ownership), then it must follow the procedures described in both the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the MDC/DWM land disposition policies; transfer of ownership ultimately requires an act of the Legislature.*

**Public Comment:** Does the integration of the former Off-Watershed Zone property into the Intake Protection Zone mean that there will be more prohibited activities in that area?

**MDC Response:** *The plan update has integrated the Off-Watershed Zone into the Intake Protection Zone in order to simplify the public's understanding of this well traveled section of the watershed. The plan does not propose any changes in the allowed uses in the former Off-Watershed Zone.*

**Public Comment:** Will logging continue on MDC land in the Wachusett Reservoir watershed? Are logging operations managed for wild game?

**MDC Response:** *Yes, MDC will continue silvicultural operations in the Wachusett Reservoir watershed. The agency's policies are described in Wachusett Reservoir Watershed Land Management Plan 2001-2010. The primary goal of DWM's silvicultural activities is water supply protection; promoting a diverse ecosystem is an objective to meet that goal. All MDC/DWM logging has recently been "Green Certified." This independent assessment acknowledges that trees harvested by MDC/DWM meet the highest standards of environmental protection.*

**Public Comment:** There are some significant areas of dumping in the watershed.

**MDC Response:** *Illegal dumping has been an on-going problem for the agency in the watershed. The plan proposes some solutions through placement of barriers, continued patrolling by the Watershed Rangers, and enforcement actions with the assistance of the State Police.*

**Public Comment:** What is the intent of biking on the existing rail trail, and is it now open for biking? What are the MDC's commitments toward other trail developments? Can additional areas of the Tributary Headwaters Zone be opened for off-road bicycling

**MDC Response:** *A major reason why the MDC has supported the Mass Central Rail Trail is to provide a place for people to walk and bike in a safe area that minimizes water quality impacts to the Wachusett Reservoir. The rail trail has been a great success. Although it is not yet finished, the sections of the rail trail that pass through MDC land in Sterling are currently open for biking. The MDC will consider partnerships, such as the existing work with Wachusett Greenways, with any group toward the development of future bike trails, however it is up to an organization to initiate any dialogue with the agency. Existing staff limitations do not allow the MDC to open additional lands of off-road bicycling. Security and water quality impacts will be considered in any decisions made towards the development of trails*

**Public Comment:** Is it possible to fix the existing fish ladder at the Oakdale Dam?

[illegible]

**Public Comment:** Creation of more parking spaces will lead to a much greater use of MDC/DWM lands than would be beneficial for water quality.